

Farm bill Forum talking points

The nation's 375 RC&D councils are a proven delivery system for USDA programs and services. RC&D Councils play an important role in the conservation, economic development and utilization of natural resources. The public private partnership between RC&D councils and USDA's NRCS Resource Conservation and Development program is based on the assumption that local citizens, with help provided through the USDA, can develop and carry out an area plan that identifies and addresses local needs while at the same time providing a return on every federal dollar invested in the program.

The upcoming Farm bill provides a unique opportunity to more directly tie councils to the delivery of the full complement of USDA programs and services in local communities. Recent decisions by USDA have limited the ability of the federal RC&D coordinators to fully assist councils. Authority needs to be clarified in the farm bill to give them the flexibility they need to access USDA programs so they can continue to assist the local volunteer councils.

The Farm bill also provides the opportunity for the USDA to recommit to fully funding the Federal investment in the public private partnership so that RC&D councils can continue to improve quality of life in local communities through conservation and economic development as they have for the past 40 years.

RC&D councils are willing to provide additional guidance in the continuing Farm bill discussions.

James Sipperly, Chairman

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